

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 225116

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: UN, PARM, MARR, MNVC, CG, GW

SUBJECT: 32ND UNGA: POSSIBLE SOVIET INITIATIVE ON
FRG MISSILE ACTIVITIES IN ZAIRE

1. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIETS AND OTHERS MAY
RAISE THE ISSUE OF FRG MISSILE ACTIVITIES IN ZAIRE DURING
THIS YEAR'S UNGA, PERHAPS IN CONNECTION WITH ATTACKS ON
WESTERN NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA. DEPT HAS
PREPARED FOLLOWING BACKGROUND INFO MATERIAL WHICH MAY BE
OF USE IF ISSUE ARISES:

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2. OVERVIEW:
MOSCOW IS APPARENTLY CONCERNED BY WHAT IT PUBLICLY
DESCRIBES AS A "SECRET AGREEMENT" OF A WEST GERMAN
FIRM (OTRAG) WITH ZAIRE TO CONSTRUCT A MISSILE TEST
RANGE IN ZAIRE'S SHABA PROVINCE. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL
TASS REPORTS, THE FACILITY WILL GIVE WEST GERMANY THE
POSSIBILITY OF PRODUCING "COMBAT BALLISTIC MISSILES, BOTH

OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC, AND CAPABLE OF CARRYING A NUCLEAR CHARGE." FURTHERMORE, TASS HAS STATED THAT THE FACILITIES THREATEN THE SECURITY OF AFRICAN NATIONS. (IN THIS REGARD, THE ANGOLAN FOREIGN MINISTER IN HIS AUGUST 25 SPEECH AT THE RECENT LAGOS CONFERENCE TERMED

THE ZAIRE-WEST GERMAN AGREEMENT "ANOTHER PLAN FOR AGGRESSION AGAINST THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA.")

OUR REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT INDICATES THAT:

(A)A PRIVATE WEST GERMAN FIRM HAS ACQUIRED A TEST FACILITY FOR SPACE ROCKETS IN ZAIRE. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY WEST GERMAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT;

(B)ZAIRE EVIDENTLY HOPES TO PROFIT FROM COMMERCIAL SPACE LAUNCHES AS WELL AS TO ENJOY A MODICUM OF PRESTIGE FROM SPACE ACTIVITIES ON ITS SOIL;

(C)MOSCOW IS PROBABLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FIRM'S WORK TO GERMAN DEVELOPMENT OF MILITARY MISSILES.

3. THE OTRAG FIRM AND ITS PROGRAM:

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THE FOUNDERS OF OTRAG (ORBITAL TRANSPORT UND RAKETEN AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT) WERE SCIENTISTS WHO BEGAN WORKING ON ROCKETS AT PEENEMUNDE. ONE OF THEM, DR. ZANGER, CONTINUED HIS ROCKET RESEARCH AFTER THE WAR AT A LABORATORY IN GERMANY AND ONE OF HIS PROTEGE LUTZ T. KAYSER TOOK OVER DIRECTION OF THAT LAB UPON ZANGER'S DEATH.

AT KAYSER'S INITIATIVE, OTRAG WAS FOUNDED IN GERMANY IN 1974 AS A PRIVATELY FUNDED STOCK CORPORATION. THE FIRM'S OBJECTIVE WAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROCKET LAUNCHING PROGRAMS WHICH WOULD BE BASED UPON TECHNOLOGY CREATED BY ZANGER AND KAYSER. BECAUSE OF THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT'S HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE TOWARD ROCKET DEVELOPMENT, OTRAG WAS ORGANIZED AS A PRIVATE COMPANY. IN ITS SEARCH FOR FINANCING, OTRAG BENEFITTED FROM WEST GERMAN LEGISLATION, PERMITTING EXTENSIVE TAX WRITE-OFFS FOR INVESTORS IN PROJECTS IN UNDEVELOPED COUNTRIES. THIS FAVORABLE TAX SITUATION HAS LED TO CHARGES THAT OTRAG IS AN ELABORATE TAX DODGING SCHEME.

KAYSER IS THE PRESIDENT OF OTRAG AND THE DAY-TO-DAY MANAGER OF ITS OPERATIONS, BUT THE COMPANY'S RANKING OFFICER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD IS KURT H. DEBUS. DEBUS, WHO WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE OLD PEENEMUNDE GROUP, IS A NATURALIZED CITIZEN OF THE U.S.. BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT, DEBUS WAS DIRECTOR OF THE JOHN F.

KENNEDY NASA SPACE CENTER IN FLORIDA. OTRAG HAS SOUGHT TO EXPLOIT DEBUS' FORMER EMPLOYMENT BY NASA AND THE FIRM HAS TAKEN THE LINE THAT, ALTHOUGH IT IS A COMPETITOR TO NASA, IT REPORTS REGULARLY ON ITS OPERATIONS TO NASA AND ENJOYS NASA SUPPORT -- ASSERTIONS WHICH ARE NOT TRUE.

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OTRAG CLAIMS TO HAVE UNIQUE TECHNOLOGY FOR SPACE LAUNCHES IN THE FORM OF CLUSTERS OF ROCKETS; ITS LARGEST LAUNCHER USES 288 ROCKET ENGINES. ACCORDING TO COMPANY SPOKESMAN, OTRAG PLANS TO LAUNCH SATELLITES WHICH WOULD NOT BE ECONOMICAL IF LAUNCHED BY NASA'S LARGE PAYLOAD ROCKETS. NASA, HOWEVER, POINTS OUT THAT BECAUSE THE SPACE SHUTTLE WILL PROVIDE MUCH GREATER THRUST THAN OTRAG'S TECHNOLOGY WOULD ALLOW, SEVERAL SATELLITES CAN BE LAUNCHED AT ONCE PROBABLY AT LOWER COST THAN THAT QUOTED BY OTRAG. OTRAG'S PLANS TO LAUNCH LARGE SATELLITES WITH CLUSTERS OF ROCKETS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE TECHNICALLY PROMISING, BUT NASA ENGINEERS BELIEVE OTRAG'S TECHNOLOGY COULD BE USE FOR HIGH-ALTITUDE SOUNDING ROCKETS AND FOR VERY SMALL SATELLITES.

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL MAY 16 TEST LAUNCH, OTRAG OFFICIALS PROBABLY HOPE TO BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE CONTRACTS WITH COUNTRIES AND PRIVATE COMPANIES TO LAUNCH SMALL COMMUNICATIONS, WEATHER AND NATURAL-RESOURCES-DETECTION SATELLITES. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT OTRAG'S TECHNOLOGY WOULD HAVE ANY UNIQUE VALUE FOR MILITARY APPLICATIONS. THE LIQUID FUELED SYSTEM HAS A LONG REACTION TIME AND VERY LITTLE PAD HOLDING TIME. MOREOVER, THE OTRAG SYSTEM WOULD HAVE VERY POOR ACCURACY. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY WEST GERMAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT, IN ANY CASE, IN THE OTRAG OPERATION.

4. ZAIRE'S INTEREST:

ZAIRE HAS GRANTED OTRAG A LEASE OF AN AREA OF APPROXIMATELY 60,000 SQUARE MILES OF COMPLETELY UNDEVELOPED TERRAIN. THE AREA IS WELL SUITED TO OTRAG'S
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PURPOSES BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH ALTITUDE (ROCKETS LAUNCHED FROM AN ALTITUDE OF APPROXIMATELY 5,000 FEET WOULD REQUIRE LESS POWER THAN IF LAUNCHED FROM A SEA LEVEL SITE) AND LOCATION RELATIVELY NEAR THE EQUATOR WHICH FACILITATES SATELLITE LAUNCHING. WHILE THE ISOLATION OF THE SHABA SITE COMPLICATES LOGISTICS, IT AFFORDS SECURITY AND A RELATIVELY SAFE LANDING AREA FOR THE FIRST STAGE OF THE ROCKET WHICH RETURNS TO EARTH IN THE VICINITY OF THE LAUNCHING SITE.

ZAIRE IS OBTAINING NO SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT AT THIS TIME. SO FAR, OTRAG HAS SPENT ONLY ABOUT \$25 MILLION ON THE PROJECT BUT IS EXPECTED TO SPEND \$12 MILLION MORE THIS YEAR. WHEN COMMERCIAL LAUNCHES BEGIN, THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRES WILL REPORTEDLY RECEIVE A PERCENTAGE OF THE FEE FOR EVERY SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHING. FROM MUBUTO'S POINT OF VIEW, THE PRESTIGE WHICH ZAIRES WOULD ENJOY AS "THE GERMAN CAPE KENNEDY OF SHABA" AS THE BRUSSELS NEWSPAPER LA LIBRE BELGIQUE CALLED IT -- WOULD PROBABLY BE EVEN MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN THE FINANCIAL REVENUE OR THE CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH THE GERMANS MIGHT MAKE TO ZAIRES INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE FORM OF ROADS AND BRIDGES.

5. YOU NEED NOT TAKE ANY ACTION AT THIS TIME. WE WILL ADVISE YOU OF ANY FURTHER INFO WE RECEIVE ON THIS SUBJECT.

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Message Attributes

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